

SAE Institute
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BACHELOR THESIS (ABSTRACT)

Translated topic:

**Work-life-balance or work interference with life
of audio freelancers in Berlin and Potsdam**

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Introduction

Shortly after the German federal elections in 2013, German public TV station ARD released the results of a political poll it had conducted. One topic of this poll was the matters that a new government should address. With 91 % of all votes, *work-family-balance* ranked second. In recent years, terms like that, summarized under *work-life-balance* (WLB), have often found their way into news headlines. Even more so, book publishers and other media have tried to make profit from the raised awareness towards those issues.

Another growingly discussed topic in Germany is *self-employment* or entrepreneurship: In the last two decades, the number of self-employed individuals has increased by 40 %. This is seen to be a result of several ongoing changes, such as Eastern Germany's economy catching up and women becoming more willing to found their own companies.

Even though both phenomena - work-life issues and freelancing - are supposed to be related, not much research has been conducted to analyze possible connections. First and foremost, this probably has to do with the scarcity of data that is available on entrepreneurship, even from federal sources. Second, there are many ways to approach the work-life complex - and the term itself is being criticized for being overly simple and bipolar. Several ways of measuring WLB and its related constructs have been developed and tested, but there is no standard procedure.

In the thesis described here, WLB was measured by using the *work interference with life scale* (WIL) that Keeney et al. had presented in an article in the *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 2/2013.

Hypothesis and goals

The hypothesis was derived from the results of the pilot studies by Keeney et al. with a total survey population of about 5000 alumni of an American university and another study by Reynolds and Renzulli from 2005. In said study, there was substantial proof

for the assumption that self-employment improves WIL, although the two scientists *did not* use the same measures as Keeney et al. Also, that effect was mainly observed on women. Given that the mean WIL from Keeney et al.'s studies was 3.03, the final hypothesis was:

The mean work interference with life-coefficient of mainly self-employed audio workers in Berlin and Potsdam is smaller than 3.03 scale points.

Besides the operationalisation of WIL, the three following terms needed to be clarified:

- Mainly self-employed: Derived from German social insurance laws.
- Audio worker: Derived from German employment agency job specifications.
- Berlin and Potsdam: Defined as mainly *working* (not *living*) in one of the cities.

Above and beyond verification of the hypothesis, another goal of the described thesis was to collect data about the population. Neither its size nor its demographics had been explored and written about.

Another motivation behind the study was to objectify recurring discussions about circumstances of work, thus helping to find ways to improve said conditions in the audio industry, which the author also works in.

Study summary

First, the state of research had to be overlooked and summarized to find proper methods of conducting survey. The amount of scientific information needed categorization leading to the review of sociological, economical, medicinal and psychological approaches to the WLB issue. In addition, a lot of non-scientific media has been published, and was briefly mentioned in the thesis.

Most of the above conceptualizations have in common the terms of resources and demands, as well as a certain division of life into different domains, e. g. work, family

and so on. By only taking one or a few of these domains into account, scientists also implicated value judgements into their research.

Instead, Keeney et al. developed a scale for measuring WIL that tries to pay respect to *all* the life domains that might be relevant across individuals. Furthermore, they incorporated different ways in which work can influence life into their research by creating time and strain-based items. In total, their scale consisted of 3 time and 3 strain-based item stems that were changed to fit all of the 8 life domains (health, family, household management, friendships, education, romantic relationships, community involvement and leisure) - thus creating a multidimensional 48-item scale.

Following this fundamental research, an online questionnaire was developed for the thesis. It contained the translations of Keeney et al.'s 48 items and 8 domain descriptions. Additionally, a question about how much time respondents invested in each domain was placed before the WIL items. The latter were to be rated on a 5-point agreement scale, questions about temporal involvement on a 4-point scale from "none" to "very much". The questionnaire was concluded by 10 demographic and job-related questions used to filter participants that didn't belong to the population and to get a picture of the general circumstances of respondents' jobs and lives.

Before the start of the survey, it was also necessary to determine the size of the population. As mentioned above, not much data was available to do so. Among the few governmental sources were statistics on sales tax payers in Berlin and Potsdam. Since every freelancer with a minimum annual income of 17500 € is required to pay sales tax, an estimation was possible through said statistics. The youngest available data (2011) lead to an estimated population of 130 audio freelancers.

During the conduction of the survey (from the 4th of September until the 17th of October 2013), the acquisition of participants played a key role in creating a sample as big as possible and therefore achieving representative results.

For that reason, possible members of the population were addressed in multiple ways:

- Social-professional organizations, e. g. Verband Deutscher Tonmeister (VDT) and Audio Engineering Society (AES)

- Schools and universities, e. g. SAE Institute Berlin and Universität der Künste (UdK)
- Audio companies, e. g. movie/dubbing studios, radio/TV stations, music studios
- Online communities, one professional magazine and word of mouth

In total, 1500 invitations were sent, mostly via e-mail. 186 people accessed the survey and 47 members of the population completed it.

Results

After the end of the survey and the analysis of all valid questionnaires, statements about the population's characteristics could be made for the first time: Audio freelancers in Berlin and Potsdam are very often men, of which three quarters live in a relationship and more than the average (40 %) have children that they live with. Also, relatively many of them are between 30 and 39 years old and their mean age is about 42 years.

Respondents worked 45 hours per week on average - a little less than other German freelancers (47 hours). Their median income was 2800 € before taxes, which is above the regional average. Flexibility, which often is named as an advantage of freelancers, showed in the fact that respondents worked in two different fields of the audio industry on average. Also, half of Berlin and Potsdam's audio workers seem to have had to deal with moving pictures during their career. This confirms the region's reputation as a centre of the German film industry.

The questions about time involvement revealed which domains were prioritized by respondents: Family and romantic relationships, but also education ranked high, whereas respondents spend little to no time on community involvement. Time and the lack of time, in general, were confirmed as a dominant factor in the life and job spheres of the population: Time-based WIL was higher than strain-based WIL in most domains and on average (time: 3.23, strain: 2.98).

Also, domains that showed a high time-based WIL were often the ones that the respondents invested less time in, for example community involvement (3.54) and health (3.30). Correspondingly, education (2.84) and romantic relationships (3.17) domains got lower time-based WIL scores and *higher* time involvement scores. Friendships (3.52) seem to be more influenced by temporal work influences than family life (3.16).

Strain from work does not seem to interfere as much with non job-related life domains. Nevertheless, some domains that had high time-based WIL also got ranked high strain-wise, e. g. health (3.14) and - again - community involvement (3.38). Romantic relationships (2.58) and family (2.81) were at the lower end of the bracket once more.

Comparing the WIL score to Keeney et al.'s studies, the hypothesis is proven false: The thesis had an average WIL of 3.10, while the respondents of the American study reached a slightly lower score of 3.03. However, this statement can only be made with an approximate 50 % risk of error, due to the relatively small gap between the two results. What can be said with a certainty of 90 % is that both populations don't show huge differences in the mean WIL of most domains, except for community involvement (3.46, Keeney: 2.94) and romantic relationships (3.07, Keeney: 2.87). Besides community involvement, health (3.23), friendships (3.22) and leisure (3.21) were above average, while household management (3.07), family (2.97) and education (2.89) were below average next to love-related things (see above).

Ideas for further research concerned the size and demographics of the population, also beyond the region of this study. Furthermore, correlations between the different variables can be explored for information on potential causes for work interference with life.